





REMARKS

ON A

RECENT EFFORT TO SUBVERT THE CHARTER

OF THE

Royal College of Surgeons;

WITH

ANIMADVERSIONS

ON

THE EVIL TENDENCY OF "THE LANCET;"

AND

OBSERVATIONS

respectfully addressed to

GENERAL PRACTITIONERS, ON THE BEST MEANS OF MAINTAINING
THEIR PRIVILEGES AND RESPECTABILITY.

BY WILLIAM COOKE,

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REPORT

OF THE

COMMISSIONERS

OF THE

LAND OFFICE

IN RESPONSE TO A RESOLUTION

PASSED BY THE

HOUSE

ADVERTISEMENT.



It is extensively known that in the months of February and March last, meetings were held for the purpose of obtaining an alteration in some of the regulations of the Council, and Court of Examiners of the Royal College of Surgeons; and the following pages were sketched immediately after attending the first meeting. The manuscript was then laid aside, under an idea that the circumstances which seemed more particularly to call for animadversion might effect their own remedy. I felt reluctant, too, to assume the quality of a censor—fully aware of my own incompetency—and having a strong disinclination to engage in controversy. The appearance, however, of Mr. Lawrence's speeches, in a volume published by himself, fixed my resolution to issue what I had written. Still, I do not undertake a direct reply to those speeches, which contain many sentiments to which I should cordially assent. In commenting upon and objecting to their spirit, though I felt it my duty to speak strongly, I hope that the courtesy due to a gentleman of great talents and high respectability in his profession, has not been violated.

Where I have given utterance to powerful feelings in relation to the labours of another gentleman, I have abstained from personality as far as it is possible to do so

when endeavouring to expose the mischievous tendency of what he promulgates. Against himself I had no hostility to indulge.

The subjects embodied in the following observations, certainly are exceedingly important; and if they fail to excite an interest, the deficiency must be in the mode of their representation. Should they fall under an abler pen, so that something which redounds to the honor of the profession, and conduces to the good of the community is elicited, I shall be contented with my reward.

As I have taken no notice of a statement privately distributed by the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons, I might, without an explanation, be chargeable with disingenuousness. It was placed in my hands when the manuscript was completed; and though it corroborated the view I had taken on some points relative to the proceedings of the Court, my observations on them were so blended with other topics, that I felt it unnecessary to make an alteration, especially as the statement itself is now before the public.

39, Trinity-square,
July 1st, 1826.

REMARKS

ON A

LATE ATTEMPT TO SUBVERT THE CHARTER

OF THE

Royal College of Surgeons,

&c. &c.

THE interests of society so intimately associate the different classes of mankind, that it is scarcely possible for one class to rise or fall without others' being essentially implicated; nevertheless, to what extent soever a man may desire to act on schemes of comprehensive usefulness, his efforts are always most efficiently exerted when they are limited to his own sphere. Many an individual has expended his time and employed his talents in fruitless endeavours to promote innovations among ranks above his influence, when, had he directed his powerful energies to more humble objects, he might have had the satisfaction of rendering important service to his own circle; and the benefits diffused from it might have proved extensively advantageous to the community.

This age has justly been denominated that of enlightened philanthropy; and though no

one is called upon voluntarily to surrender his individual interest in society, yet the period is characterized by unexampled efforts and sacrifices for the public good. Hence we have the satisfaction to observe that our government is multiplying the religious and beneficent institutions of the country, and is disposed to widen the channels for their exercise! Hence we behold so much genuine sympathy awakened by the cry of necessity, let it reach us from whatever quarter, or under whatsoever form it may! Hence it is that we are delighted with the growing disposition to merge minor distinctions, for the purpose of combining and concentrating exertions for the diffusion of knowledge throughout the world! Men whose petty distinctions had been to them a wall of separation, now cordially meet—forget for the time their respective peculiarities—and instead of making any compromise of principle, they derive an elevation of character from their intercourse. To the cause we have just adverted to, is ascribable that unparalleled surrender of comfort and interest which many of our countrymen have made, who, undaunted by unhealthy climes, regardless of danger and privation, have left their native land, resigned their social pleasures, and have almost dissolved the ties of kindred—to dwell among hordes of savages, or among human beings debased by abject ignorance or degraded by

adherence to the most abominable or cruel rites—in hope of civilizing the barbarian, of instructing the uninformed, and of directing pagans and idolaters from their unavailing and disgusting superstitions, to the volume of divine revelation, and the duties it enjoins.

These preliminary observations may appear scarcely relevant to the subject more immediately in question, but we must bear in mind that medical men are not an insulated body, but occupy an important rank in the gradations of British society: indeed they are so intimately connected with every other class, that even where they do not adopt prevailing opinions, nor actually participate in the exertions which those classes are making, they cannot fail to imbibe a measure of their spirit.

If we turn our attention from what is transpiring in the world, to a consideration of the movements taking place in the department of the Healing Art, we shall discover a striking analogy. There is, in the first place, an unprecedented regard to general education; and in the second, a solicitude to obtain a remission of some of the restrictions by which the respective orders have been kept apart; and in the third, a laudable anxiety to enlarge the means of benevolence, to meet the painful emergencies to which professional life is exposed.

In proportion to the light imparted to the mind by education, we usually find a desire for higher attainments in knowledge excited ; but it does not necessarily follow that commensurate exertions in patient and persevering study ensue. In the present day, learning is highly appreciated, and peculiar facilities are afforded ; but these easy steps have a tendency, unless much care be taken, to supersede those laborious mental exertions on which the formation of a powerful character depends. A man of superficial reading, and diligent in his attendance on lectures, may accumulate extensive information. He may indeed familiarize himself with every thing that the most able preceptors teach ; but if he habitually neglect that discipline of the mind on which the successful cultivation of science and its application to practical purposes really depend, he will be a very incompetent judge of the labors which some of his predecessors underwent in ascending the rugged, and, in many respects, unbeaten acclivity, and in securing for him the privileges he enjoys. Having been raised to a considerable eminence, he becomes a disputant for new facilities, without either disposition or ability to avail himself of his advantages, and to commence, in his turn, an explorer of new heights, a smoother of new difficulties in the attainment of knowledge.

Desirable as it may be to render the path to knowledge as easy as possible, it is necessary to guard against the natural disposition to satisfaction and self-complacency which the human mind is forward enough to indulge. It is the age of teaching. The babe just beginning to walk, and the septuagenarian nearly ending his journey, and his eyes dim from the advance of years, have equally provided for them the means of instruction. Successive systems of a more refined order, proposing a shorter and more easy course to the temple—each possessing some advantages—have been urged upon our attention. These facilities may be compared to some of the machinery in commerce and agriculture. They are exceedingly beneficial if their use be wisely regulated. They amplify our resources, and economize our time; but if worked to excess we acquire possessions which cannot be appropriated. If too, they are so applied as to supersede corporeal exertions—our manly vigour, and manual dexterity will be impaired. Many an individual has gained extensive information without being capable of applying it to any useful purpose; without having acquired the power of vigorous thought, or of patient research; and others have been raised to an eminence, whence they behold the beauty of the scenery, but remain unacquainted with the difficulties

their conductors encountered in preparing the way. They gain neither feeling—nor taste—nor habit—nor constitution for scientific enterprise.

With the advancement of knowledge, liberality of sentiment is generally co-existent. Invidious distinctions become loathsome, and unnecessary restrictions are intolerable. It is here, in conjunction I apprehend with some idea that the Royal College of Surgeons can bestow on its Members a succedaneum for labour, that we may observe the commencement of discontent with the Regulations of that chartered and distinguished body.*

Powerful as this country is in her energies, wise as she is in her councils, standing, indeed, pre-eminent among the nations of the

* The following observations made by a Reviewer, on some of the hindrances in the cultivation and improvement of the useful and elegant arts, are not inappropriate, and the quotation will perhaps not be unacceptable. After alluding to some refinements in excellence, by which the difficulty of the means is concealed, he adds, “and make that masterly facility which has been acquired by the methodical study of years, appear to be the random effusion of playful negligence, or the accidental felicity of a lucky moment: for ignorant and eager students, youths of more rapidity of conception than acuteness or accuracy of observation, continually mistake them, and consequently pursue their studies in an inverted progress. They begin by effect without labour, and end by labour without effect.—*Northcote's Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds.* Ed. Rev. 1814.

world, for her intellectual light and moral feeling, it is deeply to be lamented that she retains among her enactments some statutes and tests affecting offices, seats of learning, and other national privileges, which disgrace an enlightened community, and which will not be abolished till they have ceased to be associated with the early recollections of old and tenacious men, high in office, mighty in power, and selfish in principle.—Even then, another generation might spring up, inheriting the same prejudices, which “growing with their growth, and strengthening with their strength,” form again almost a necessary part of the existence of hoary age. It has often been found more easy to subvert a country, than to dethrone a prepossession. It cannot be effected by prying into abuses and exaggerating their nature; nor by sarcasm and ridicule; nor by the subversion of governing laws. An attempt to violate these powerful principles will only rivet afresh the chains of those who engage in the attack; and perhaps may afford a pretext for the erection of some new defences as a security against a future assailant. But passive obedience is not the only alternative to which we are reduced, for many rightful claims, though long withheld, must ultimately be conceded to persevering and conciliatory application.

Policy, however, suggests a variety of expedients likely to hasten us to a successful issue. Daily observation must teach us the propriety of not irritating the party in power. Firm and continued efforts, combined with the exercise of due respect, should alone be employed. We have no warrant to infer that a party controlled by prejudices detrimental to the interests of society, is not entitled to the most respectful consideration. It is respect paid to a frailty, which attaches more or less to human nature, and its powerful influence on some topics, is not incompatible with the existence of peculiar excellencies on others. In more advanced stages of human intellect, it is probable that we shall not have to combat principles so restrictive as those we now often meet with, and cannot but perceive operating on our own minds. Some deference is due to early associations. If we look into the history of a few centuries, we shall be surprised to see how very slowly expanded and liberal sentiments have been developed. More has been effected within the last twenty years, than during the previous century, and is attributable, in a very great degree, to means already alluded to, that have happily amalgamated subordinate differences of opinion, by which even well-disposed men had long been kept shy of each other.

These remarks are more closely allied to the subject under consideration than may, at first sight, appear. Medical men looking abroad upon the world have witnessed the obliteration of lines of demarkation. Their ears have been saluted with the praises of liberality--and, whilst they have exulted in the growth of expanded sentiments elsewhere, they perceived that amongst themselves there was too much of jealous feeling, and that in their own institutions there were restrictions neither conducing to the public welfare, nor to the honor of the profession. They were therefore but little prepared for additional limitations, which it appeared wise on the part of the Court of Examiners of the College to set up; and a crisis has arrived in which some efforts have been made to remedy the grievances, under which the Members of that College supposed themselves injured and degraded.

The causes, however, of the movements which have recently taken place, must be regarded as somewhat remote. They were operating widely, and often we heard detached murmurs of discontent. They were striking deep into the mind, and became rather a popular topic at the festive board, as well as at other occasional interviews. There appeared to be a feeling among the members of the

College, that some amendment was required in the arrangement and economy of that important institution ; or, at least, that some explanation was requisite, as to the motives under which certain regulations had been adopted. Nothing seemed wanting but a leader ; some enterprizing man who should collect the scattered discontents, and bring them into combined operation. This honor devolved on the Editor of *The Lancet*, who, I am informed, has been at the helm of affairs ;—promulgating grievances ; convening and controlling meetings ; and violating decorum, and inciting to revolt in the theatre of the College itself. It seems, however, that whilst this individual was watching over the proceedings, he deemed it expedient to depute his presiding authority to a gentleman, who occupies commanding rank ; and who has distinguished himself, both as an author and a surgeon. But in appreciating the efforts which have been made, it is proper to bear in mind, that though select preliminary meetings are reported to have been convened at the President's house ; and though the public meetings were conducted under his auspices, and though the proceedings at those meetings were recommended by other gentlemen of equal respectability, the individual who had convened the meeting, possessed the

power, and exercised the prerogative which that power gave him—of guiding the whole business. What he approved, was allowed quietly to pass, whilst that of which he disapproved was overthrown; so that Mr. Lawrence, and other gentlemen deservedly held in high esteem in the profession, were placed, though perhaps not voluntarily so, in a situation of entire subserviency. Although several respectable practitioners certainly were at the first meeting, the majority consisted of young men, many of whom had not settled in practice, and others, who might have entered on practical duties, had but just emerged from their preliminary studies. Some gentlemen who attended the meeting, went there without knowing who had convened it, and from its having the sanction of Mr. Lawrence's name, they expected that it would be conducted with order, and assured themselves that the proceedings would, at least, wear an aspect of respect towards the existing Court.

It is due to Mr. Lawrence to state, that he made some efforts, after the disgraceful proceedings in the College theatre, to secure about him the attendance of respectable and temperate men, for the purpose of counteracting any tendency to violent measures; but the course adopted by the President on

opening the business of the meeting, was ill adapted to secure unanimity amongst the older members present, on whose influence success greatly depended. However they might at the moment be entertained with sallies of humour,—with the dexterity of hypercriticism,—with severities of sarcasm,—with strenuous attempts at ridicule,—their transient merriment would afford no evidence that they acquiesced in the imputations cast upon the Court ; or, that they approved of all the measures proposed for their own adoption. Satire and sarcasm are dangerous instruments, and are not required for the advancement of science. He who condescends to employ them, will seldom obtain by them an accession to his honors, nor elevate himself in the good opinion of the profession ; nor will he secure to himself pleasing retrospection. An individual who is actuated by the sole object of advancing the honors and efficiency of Surgery, though in the diversity of opinions his plans may not recommend themselves to every practitioner in the art, will secure a general approbation of his noble motive, and will undoubtedly realize extensive support. But, if whilst professing to direct his efforts to the removal of grievances, he descend to personal invective ; if his conduct excite a suspicion

that some private pique is indulged, his exertions cannot be sanctioned by those who value the estimation of the wisest and best in society.

The expediency of the measures adopted by every one with whom an important trust is deposited, ought to be open to animadversion; but before we impugn the motives of others, we should seek the clearest evidence of their delinquency. Who are the individuals whose conduct in the legislative and executive departments of the College has been the object of such severity of censure? Who are the men who have been held up to ridicule—whose proceedings have been made the objects of burlesque? Are they men who have been raised to eminence merely by the hand of patronage, or who have arrogated to themselves distinctions of which they are not fairly deserving? No!—the names of Blizard, and Cline, and Abernethy, and Cooper, and others which might be adduced, at once overthrow such an opinion. These are men whose laurels have been fairly won—men who have patiently and perseveringly studied their profession; who have assiduously executed the important duties which devolve on the Surgeon; and who have severally distinguished themselves in the diffusion of anatomical and surgical knowledge.

If we look into past ages we shall find many individuals rising high, and shining in their course with a brilliance that casts a shade upon their cotemporaries ; but never can we select an equal period, within which anatomical and surgical knowledge has become so widely diffused, as within the last twenty years ; and it is impossible to contemplate the great improvements which have taken place in surgery without finding them closely associated with the names just mentioned.

In former times age was venerated ; but it has become rather prevalent of late to speak of an old man in the language of contempt. We are too apt to luxuriate in the light which shines upon our path, without due consideration of its source. If those of the profession who have been educated in later times, have clearer views of disease, and possess more simple, but, at the same time, more efficient means of treatment, than ancient principles might have suggested, it surely does not become them to mark with disrespect the Fathers of the science, to whose lessons they have been mainly indebted for at least the elementary principles of recent improvements ; and from whose exemplary zeal and salutary counsel their pupils derived the impulse to continued and successful exertions. If we anticipate the period when some who are not sparing

in scornful insinuation, but who have scarcely attained the meridian of life, shall in their turn become septuagenarians—should they be surrounded with no brighter honors, relatively to the advantages enjoyed, than those to which the older surgeons of the present day are fully entitled—they will enjoy distinctions of no little value in the estimation of mankind.

As knowledge is successive, we never can fully estimate how much we are indebted to those who preceded us. When we closely and impartially investigate the train which leads to some important discovery, we shall often find that the first hint, the clue to the whole, was given in our early lessons, or thrown out in the casual observation of another person. The whole course of our life is greatly influenced by the example as well as the precepts of those individuals to whose instructions we are invited to look, and whose habits we adopt. If our estimate of a man's usefulness be limited to what he has accomplished with his pen, we may do him the utmost injustice, and rob science of one of its best friends; for, many an individual has contributed very materially to its advancement, when he has done nothing more than foster zeal, perpetuate the means of exertion, and inculcate the purest and most successful motives to guide exertion. Though we have not the

satisfaction to associate the name of Blizzard with the literature of the profession, his name will be borne in the most respectful remembrance when a large proportion of the many volumes which crowd our libraries is totally forgotten. The name of Sir William Blizzard will be handed down to posterity, as the zealous patron, not only of every legitimate means for extending the knowledge and improving the practice of his own art, but as the patron of learning universally : and it is with feelings of great satisfaction I observe, that notwithstanding the pressure of years and of duty, he is now lending his aid for the establishment of a new order of schools, where the first developments of the mind are submitted to discipline. Having repeatedly had occasion to witness his great efforts to encourage honorable exertion, even in the lower ranks of the profession, I feel it incumbent upon me, at the hazard of exciting his displeasure, and at the risk of incurring the imputation of an adulator, to bear my testimony to his disinterested courteousness, and his lively regard to principles of humanity and kindness—testimony to which I firmly believe that all who know him will respond. He must be viewed too as the patriarch among the existing generations of anatomists and surgeons.*

* I have great pleasure in quoting the following testimonial,

The venerable name of Cline it is impossible to mention without exciting some of the warmest feelings of reverential regard, not only in

which is as honorable to the testifier as to him whose excellencies it attests.—

“In succeeding Sir William Blizard in the honorable office of Professor of Anatomy and Surgery, I think it right to inform my audience that he was my earliest instructor in these sciences; and that I am indebted to him for much and most valuable information respecting them. My warmest thanks are also due to him for the interest he excited in my mind towards these studies, and for the excellent advice he gave me, in common with other students, to direct me in the attainment of knowledge.

“‘Let your search after truth,’ he would say, ‘be eager and constant. Be wary of admitting propositions to be facts, before you have submitted them to the strictest examination. If, after this, you believe them to be true, never disregard or forget any one of them, however unimportant it may at the time appear. Should you perceive truths to be important, make them the motives of action; let them serve as springs to your conduct.’

“‘Many persons,’ he remarked, ‘acknowledge truth with apathy; they assent to it, but it produces no further effect upon their minds. Truths, however, are of importance, in proportion as they admit of inferences which ought to have an influence upon our conduct; and if we neglect to draw these inferences, or to act in conformity to them, we fail in essential duties.’

“Our preceptor further contrived by various means to excite a degree of enthusiasm in the minds of his pupils. He displayed to us the *beau ideal* of the medical character;—I cannot readily tell you how splendid and brilliant he made it appear;—and then he cautioned us never to tarnish its lustre by any disingenuous conduct, by any thing that wore even the semblance of dishonour. He caused the sentiment of the

the bosom of an extended circle of former pupils, but among a large number of practitioners whom he has been accustomed to aid by his counsel and skill. Were I to attempt to discuss the claims of Mr. Abernethy, and of Sir Astley Cooper, to the most respectful consideration of the profession, and, indeed, of mankind, it would be an effort of supererogation. I should have the satisfaction, however, of knowing, that whilst I could not enhance their reputation by my praise, neither would a tribute of respect and gratitude diminish it.

It was my felicity to study anatomy and surgery under Mr. Abernethy, at the time when Mr. Lawrence was an apprentice to that gentleman—and I shall not cease to remember the reciprocal esteem then manifested between the preceptor and the pupil—nor the very handsome terms in which Mr. Abernethy recommended to his class the first literary production of his young friend. However, it is not Mr. Lawrence alone, but a numerous tribe of surgeons also, who will cherish a grateful and pleasing recollection of the advantages

philanthropic Chremes, in the *Heautontimorumenos* of Terence, to be inscribed on the walls of the hospital-surgery, that students should have constantly before them an admonition to humanity, drawn from a reflection of their own wants; *Homo sum; humani nihil à me alienum puto.*”

Abernethy's Inquiry into the probability and rationality of Mr. Hunter's Theory of Life. p. 1—3. 1814.

they enjoyed, not only from the lessons inculcated on anatomy and surgery at St. Bartholomew's and St. Thomas's Hospitals, but for examples of zeal and liberality so extensively useful, and so well adapted to shed a lustre on surgical character. Whilst, however, we admire and extol the zeal of these illustrious teachers, and are ready to imbibe somewhat of their principles, why should we overlook the sources whence *they* derived those instructions which formed the basis of *their* future eminence? Making all due allowance for the times in which they studied, and for the comparative infancy of what I might call modern science—let me ask, whether those gentlemen were not as dependent on the examples before them, and on the process of enquiry to which they were directed, as we are on those erudite and able men to whose precepts we have listened, whose practice we have imitated, and on whose suggestions some have raised a magnificent superstructure, which, perhaps, they designate their own?

There is something really delightful in contemplating the dependence of successive ages, and of gradations in society, on one another; and nothing can betray greater disingenuousness than a disposition to overlook the chain by which the improvements of one age are connected with those which preceded. Some-

times, indeed, a splendid genius rises up, and in the glory of his course, he seems to establish for himself an independent existence; but, on careful investigation, we shall usually find that there were peculiar circumstances antecedently, which, being grasped by a mind of uncommon vigour, led to the pre-eminence. Who will maintain that John Hunter and Sir Humphrey Davy, illustrious as they have been for the extent and importance of their discoveries, were not as much indebted to their predecessors for the first and leading principles of thought and enquiry, with which they commenced their career of research and experiment, as those of us, with humbler powers, are indebted to our preceptors for the rudiments of professional knowledge which guide us in practice? The capacity of taking up the labours of our ancestors, and carrying on the works they commenced, with progressive improvement, is a feature in which reason evinces its superiority to instinct. If we contemplate our own works, or those of our contemporaries, we generally find them more to our taste than the labours of a preceding age. The first project appears very rude; but, perhaps, imperfect as it is, there was more real genius in its construction than has been manifested in all the slowly-progressing improvements. We shall do well to guard against

a disposition to esteem but lightly men and things that are old. There is no danger of the value of things really antique being depreciated; nor does there exist any cause for apprehension that we might but lightly estimate the benefits which succeeding ages will derive from the present; for we are ready enough to attach importance—even the importance of perpetuity—to schemes which we fancy were projected, or essentially advanced by ourselves.

The occasional retrogression of science, which has undoubtedly occurred, affords no argument against the positions advanced; but it should stimulate us to watch against the apathy to which our self-complacency might lead. It does not *necessarily* follow, because we sat at the feet of men the most renowned for their attainments, and imbibed the lessons they taught, and applauded the wisdom of their counsels, that we must therefore be wiser than our fathers were, whose privileges were not so numerous as ours. It needs but little exercise of talent to remember the leading points in the lectures of an able anatomist and surgeon; but some talent is necessary in gathering up his instructions, making ourselves masters of what he has done, marshalling what we learn, and then starting vigorously to effect additional discovery. Some discernment

is requisite in the application of what we acquire to the distinction of diseases which bear close analogies; in the skilful adaptation of our resources to guide a painful and perilous malady to a happy termination.

We find here a topic which binds us closely in society. The powers of the mind are very limited:—Life is short. The science of alleviating human suffering, is very comprehensive—and hitherto many of the afflictions incident to mankind, are beyond the power of human skill to remove—yes, even to allay. Under considerations so momentous, what ought we to do? Will it avail us any thing to spend our time in reproaching those who preceded us, for not judging more accurately—for not handing down to us clearer views of the nature and management of conditions which have been so afflictive to mankind in all ages? If we indulge in painful retrospection; tracing to the time of the “Prince of Physicians,” the “divine Hippocrates,” and discover, that although so many centuries have intervened, and though the line of agents specially devoted to these objects, runs through the whole period, yet on many important points little or no advancement has been made; it will profit us nothing to indulge in the spirit of animadversion; nor would the exposure of their deficiencies lessen our own responsibility. If,

indeed, the review brought us to a deep conviction of the difficulty of pathological inquiry, we should have no disposition to expend our little time in strife about extraneous and trifling points, but should be actuated by an emulation impelling us onward to useful labour. If we content ourselves with looking for subjects on which envy, malevolence, censoriousness, personal satire, or any other malignant passion might rankle, and fritter our time in useless controversy, we shall acquire nothing worth living for ; and the decrepitude of age might steal upon us, without its being solaced with the consciousness that in the antecedent years of energy we had given “ *a right direction of our abilities to right objects.*”

The great business of education is to discipline the mind for continued and powerful exertion ; and these exertions should ever have an honorable and a humane reference to the exigencies and good of society. It may not be our privilege to do much, but if we do not positively advance knowledge, let us make a firm stand against its decline :— and if we feel no interest in actually fostering kind and liberal feelings, let us not sow the seeds of discord.

There is a serious responsibility attaching to every man in social life, on account of the influence of his example ; for each has a sphere in which his conduct will have some weight in

leading others to results which are either beneficial or detrimental.

I have been led to these reflections for the purpose of showing, that in the advancement of science there is *progression*. Age is dependent on age—zeal animates zeal—discovery hangs on discovery—one luminary borrows from another: and that we are called upon to fill various offices and conditions in carrying on the process.

I would not, however, maintain that we shall not meet with hindrances; for, as our path becomes increasingly enlightened, we shall discover that some amendments must be adopted even in the schools of science. But where we have to seek improvement, let us bear in mind, that the men who preceded us were quite as upright as ourselves; perhaps did much more in the furtherance of science, and in the maintenance of facilities for its cultivation, than we shall ever do.

The points more particularly complained of, in reference to the legislative and executive departments of the College of Surgeons, may perhaps with propriety claim some inquiry. The arrangement which has given most general offence, is one of comparative insignificance, namely—the admission to the theatre at the back entrance. The distinction, I own, appears somewhat invidious, and could not fail, under

the present elevated tone of feeling in Society, to excite dissatisfaction. I firmly persuade myself that it did not originate in a sentiment of disrespect to the members in general, but that greater conveniency of access alone was contemplated. Still it wears an aspect of degradation. It meets a feeling in the human breast too ready to misinterpret the best intentions of official men; and if an alteration can be effected, it is desirable it should be done as soon as possible. One year the members were admitted by the front door, but this was found inconvenient from the length of time occupied in taking seats. This, however, I apprehend, might easily be obviated. There is another and a greater inconvenience which cannot perhaps so easily be remedied, namely—the want of accommodation in the theatre itself. When it was projected no one could calculate that the number of practitioners in surgery would rapidly and greatly increase, and would desire so generally to avail themselves of the lectures to which it was appropriated. Indeed, had not the Court been solicitous to appoint the ablest men to the professorships, and to give the greatest efficiency to their usefulness, it would, at least, have escaped the charge of deficient accommodation. Whether the theatre will admit of enlargement, it is not for me to decide; but there

are questions, under existing circumstances, which a member might fairly propose. He may be quite disposed to appreciate the respect which it is desirable to show towards other departments of the profession; and might be fully as capable as others of deriving pleasure from witnessing their introduction as visitors: but still he might be justified in asking why he himself—entitled to priority of consideration—should be excluded? He has a claim as a member, and the topics discussed have a more direct relation to his duties and competency in practice; so that on both accounts he may be warranted in thinking that courteousness should be suspended rather than considerations of a more binding nature. He might rejoice as much as others in the admission of students, but still he might argue, with respect to many of them, that they had better be well-grounding themselves in the elementary studies, to which their time is chiefly devoted, than in coming at an early age, to the higher subjects developed at the College. The Lectures here are precisely adapted for men in practice. Its theatre is a sort of adult school, where they revive the recollection of topics apt to glide from the memory—receive condensed views of branches of knowledge not so much cultivated when they were engaged in preliminary studies,

as they are now, and where the latest improvements in practice are pointed out. If, therefore, the accommodation is too restricted to allow of the admission, both of students and practitioners, a moment's consideration will determine which should have the preference. Novelty, however, has peculiar charms, even in surgery, and as there has been a frequent change in the professorships, it is not unlikely the crowd might be partly ascribable to a wish to see and hear lecturers who have risen to popularity, since a large proportion of the members now in practice, completed their preparatory course. This observation is corroborated by the fact, that during the latter weeks of the delivery of the late courses of lectures the theatre was not filled. It will not be a subject of congratulation to learn that there is adequate accommodation, owing to the non-attendance of members, but, if it can be effected, we shall rejoice when there is ample room for those who are connected with the College, as well as pupils, and for the attendance of men, distinguished in the practice of physic, and individuals of exalted rank in other sciences.

Another subject of serious complaint has been the inaccessibility of the Museum, but surely there can be little cause of dissatisfaction here. Twice a week, for three months,

the members not only have access themselves but can introduce their friends ; and at other periods they can obtain admission by only soliciting that favor from one of the curators. Those who will take the trouble to consider the nature of the museum, especially those who are acquainted with the damage anatomical preparations sustain from dust and handling, will be satisfied that there could not be indiscriminate admission without detriment to those specimens, at least, that do not admit of being defended by glass. Besides, it is well known, and it is no slight disgrace to our national character, that Englishmen have such a propensity to injure wantonly, when admitted to public institutions, that promiscuous access could not be allowed without making an unlimited demand on the time of the officers. For purposes of mere inspection then, surely the museum is sufficiently accessible ; and I believe it is a fact ; that those who have been loudest in their complaints, have been amongst the most infrequent of the visitors.

If it be true that persons have been refused permission to take drawings from the specimens, I have little doubt but that a satisfactory reason would be assigned, if we take the trouble to inquire. Where there is an effort to make a strong case, we should be very cautious how we admit *ex parte* statements.

It is in vain, in such a case, to indulge in conjectures, or it is easy to conceive, of circumstances which would fully justify the refusal. Were it the ultimate intention of the Court to prevent the preparations and specimens from being made subservient to public utility, I should consider it as being guided by an illiberal policy—unjust to the public, from whose munificence the edifice has been raised—unjust to men of science, who have made the museum a depository of discoveries from all quarters of the world—unjust to the profession who have transmitted many valuable specimens—and unworthy of the eminent character of the Institution. Individuals who have become possessed of facts adapted to throw light on some important points in the science of medicine or surgery, do themselves high honor in the promptitude with which they make them known. Nothing is more derogatory to the character of the profession, and to the interests of humanity, than the concealment of discoveries which can in the remotest way tend to the mitigation of human suffering. However, the time when the full disclosure can be made with the best effect, must depend on a variety of circumstances with which the public might not be acquainted. They may form parts of a series of observations, for the connecting and disposal of

which, further observations may be indispensably requisite. It has long been known that the formation of a catalogue of the museum has been in contemplation, and it is not unlikely, that some of the more important specimens may be engraved, and if so, we perceive a sufficient reason to suspend permission to take drawings.* Circumstances over which human agency can have no control, have delayed the catalogue, but we should be thankful that *the book is open at the College*, and if the facts are not accessible in written documents, they are recorded in the memory of the excellent and indefatigable conservator, who with unwearied patience and unparalleled candour, unfolds the pages of this immense volume, and reads, line by line, to his numerous visitors. Were it the wish of the Court to withhold information regarding this splendid collection, it could not have been more unfortunate in the choice of a superintendant. The appointment of Mr. Clift, and the estimation in which he is held, are of themselves unequivocal proofs that it was the wish of the Court to invite and to reward inquiry.

* The great improvements lately made in the art of Lithographic Drawing, and the comparatively small expence at which it is effected, leads us to hope that much good may be done in this way.

Hitherto it has been impossible for any one, except Mr. Clift, to give an explanation of the specimens, and as this duty, with many others of a complicated nature, has devolved on him, we cannot wonder that the catalogue, which he only can compile, should be long in its completion. For a considerable season, however, it has occupied all the time he could bestow during the day, and to fulfil the important task as speedily as possible, he has encroached not a little on the hours of repose at night. Those who know this gentleman must be convinced that he needs no stimulus to exertion; our chief cause of apprehension is, lest by *over-exertion* he may induce disabilities, which often abridge the usefulness of men who aim at accomplishing too much.

When finished, this exposition will prove a most important accession to the scientific library, multiplying in a manner the museum itself. Here we shall find important facts in human and comparative anatomy, as well as in other departments of natural history, and in morbid anatomy, accumulated from all parts of the world, and the produce of all periods of time. When these contributions have undergone elimination, the valuable part being recorded and published, will be wafted by the winds of heaven to the four quarters of the globe. As the catalogue will undoubtedly

be deposited in the library of every University and College, it will prove a stimulus to exertion—will supply materials for thought and inquiry—will add another gem to the honorary emblems of the country. By demonstrating the zealous and enlightened character of the Court, in accumulating, appreciating, and publishing what it receives from distant nations, as well as from the resources of its own country—it will also prove a powerful incentive to the transmission of additional objects of interest, whose value becomes highly increased when deposited where they admit of immediate comparison with similar or analogous products, obtained from other countries, or from distant parts of the same kingdom.

Another heavy complaint has been founded on the *self-election* of the members of the Court; and, on this point we are led to ask, whether some alteration might not be advantageously made. The qualifications now demanded from the medical and surgical practitioner raise him among the orders of intellectual society, and the general body of members have the feeling that more respect is due to them, than they were disposed formerly to claim; and it is not very apparent that any evil would arise from an alteration more adapted to the spirit of the times, and to the advancement of learning. An election left wholly at

the discrimination of the general body, might perhaps be productive of party spirit, chicanery, of periodical commotions and feuds, materially disturbing the orderly habits of medical men. Besides, if the Court were frequently changed, or liable to be so, though the members might feel desirous of discharging their duties with zeal and fidelity, there would be a degree of impediment to schemes of comprehensive utility. Melioration in the plans by which scientific Institutions are regulated, must, as in science itself, be progressive. The wisest schemes projected by one Court, might meet with such objections or modifications in the next, that improvements would be materially delayed. It is almost invariably found that the accession of new members to committees, for a time rather retards than accelerates business. With the best intentions they suggest plans, and raise objections, which long before had undergone the maturest discussion; whilst gentlemen who have been accustomed to act together, acquire business-like habits and co-operate with decision and energy. Still, in every association there will be some men of inefficiency, and it is desirable to have regulations by which their names should be dropped, in a respectful manner, at the expiration of a year. In committees or councils of subordinate Societies, the regulation that one

third or a fourth of the whole number, those who have least frequently attended, should annually go out of office, and not be eligible for re-election for one year, is a very salutary, if not an unexceptionable law. Though it may perhaps be advantageous that some of the higher offices at the College should be filled by the same gentlemen for more than a year ; or, if annually, that the election be made from a chosen band of veterans, holding their pre-eminent rank in perpetuity ; yet, even should some temporary inconvenience arise from it, a part of the Court ought to go out of office yearly, and others be chosen, to prevent the monopoly of influence, which not unfrequently degenerates into apathy, and will never fail to excite jealousy and suspicion. Indeed, it is a post of professional honor and influence, and it is but fair that the privileges which appertain to the profession should be as much divided as is consistent with the well-being of the College.

I have never heard it imputed to the Court, that it had been guilty of any malversation in the great responsibility of choosing individuals to fill up vacancies ; and I think it will be found that no man whose talents, standing, and rank as a surgeon entitled him to the office, has ever been overlooked, without an adequate reason. But still I would suggest

that if the Court, retaining exclusively the right of nominating individuals, were to refer them for approval to the general body, it would have a tendency to excite an interest in the College which, at present, the members do not feel.

As the practice of medicine is now, in many instances, conjoined with surgery on a plan so much more simple and honorable than formerly, why may not a man who embraces the two departments be eligible to occupy a place on the Court, provided his surgical qualifications entitle him to the distinction? The number might not be allowed to exceed a fifth or a sixth. We have amongst us some men of high attainments in anatomy and surgery, and I cannot but hope the time is approaching, when the adjunct of medicine will be so conducted as not to constitute a disqualification for any office. Plans of this nature would certainly alter the constitution of the College. Deliberation should be allowed; but some modification, adapted to meet the elevated character of the members, would lead to many important results. Distinguished as our College undoubtedly is, we must recollect that its chief glory consists—not in its museum, magnificent as it is; not in its Court, illustrious as are the men who form it; not in its professorships, though so extensively useful; but in its relation to the science and practice of surgery among

a people whose attainments in knowledge surpass those of any other nation in the world. It should be worthy—and it is worthy—of the country. The circumstance of its needing occasional modification of its laws, is not incompatible with this opinion, but rather strengthens it; for as laws are enacted to preserve good order, and to secure the fulfilment of relative obligations—in proportion as intellectual light is diffused, or correct feeling excited, and exert their due influence—the most perfect scheme of legislation will need adaptation. The College now adopts every surgeon, and each becomes tributary to its support; and it will be no detraction from its dignity, if it shield by its protection, and foster by its encouragement, all who have complied with the required terms of qualification. In proportion as a reciprocity of interest is maintained, surgery will advance, and its claims to universal confidence will become more potent. The College, being the head of the science, should maintain high ground. It should exercise the strictest scrutiny into qualification :—but where, by talent and industry, the standard is fully attained, its favors should be equally bestowed.

Believing that the gentlemen who are now in office, are really desirous to promote the honor and interest of the profession, I cannot doubt that such variations in the laws will be

made, as are congenial with the interests of the body, and with the spirit of emulation they have themselves excited. No man can look into his own mind without being convinced that long-standing impressions are slowly overcome; and yet, when they are so, he is surprised at his former pertinacity. Whilst then we feel it right to disclose our own views, let us treat the opinions of others with becoming respect—especially those opinions which have been acted upon with no small degree of success. For, however we may complain, and whatever new projects we may strike out—it is incontrovertible that the plans adopted by the Court of the College of Surgeons have been most extensively beneficial. And whilst there have been, and perhaps are, as many distinguished men in some departments of our profession on the continent, as in England, or even more—it has been attested by foreigners well able to determine the fact, that in no country is a high degree of professional attainment so *general* as in this.

Amongst innovations on the Bye Laws of the College, one has recently been adopted which certainly places the disinterestedness of the Court under a rather questionable aspect. It not unfrequently happens, in the discharge of a public trust, that we have no alternative but to shrink from a faithful and conscientious

discharge of duty, or incur the imputation of being actuated by a selfish motive : and many good and upright men, holding such unworthy motives in the utmost detestation, have not firmness enough to express and perform what may appear to them perfectly correct, lest their intentions should be suspected.

In the year 1824, the Court came to the resolution of excluding testimonials of attendance on summer courses of lectures on anatomy ; and also, to restrict private teaching, they resolved to exclude the certificates of lecturers unconnected with certain specified hospitals, or with private schools then in existence. Most of the Court being hospital surgeons, it must be supposed that, from early habits and present associations, they would entertain a predilection in favor of those establishments ; and it has been insinuated that they have allowed themselves to be governed by this feeling. I will not stay to rebut an imputation, equally unworthy of those who make it, as those who made the law are above the conduct laid to their charge. Still, however, it is an important point ; and laying aside the motive, we may be allowed to enquire whether it is the likeliest means to secure the most efficient education, and the most extensive and intimate knowledge of anatomy and surgery.

If we look back twenty or thirty years, we shall all be disposed to maintain, that a visit to the metropolitan hospitals was essentially necessary to study both the structure of the body, and the art of surgery; and with every possible concession to the eminence of many provincial surgeons, and the excellent arrangements in many of their hospitals, it must surely be admitted that a twelvemonth's residence in London will afford comprehensive views of surgical and medical sciences, and of science in general, which cannot be obtained elsewhere, and which will amply repay the expense incurred. Those gentlemen who felt this necessity the strongest—and to whose talents, example, and labours, we are mainly indebted, if such regulations have become less needful—must be expected to have some prejudices to encounter when called upon by the rapidly increasing number of private lecturers, to decide whether their tendency may not hinder the cultivation of knowledge, rather than further it. That there may exist some partiality for the old system, is perfectly compatible with the most honorable intentions; and I have little doubt but that if the Court condescended to detail the views it has taken on this point, and on others to which an allusion has been made, it would satisfy a large portion of those members who are now

somewhat inclined to be censorious. We ought never to forget that the Court has most important duties to fulfil, and that it has sources of information not accessible to private individuals. Let us bear in mind, too, how very apt we are to be suspicious of men in power, and how often it has happened that when men who had been among the most severe in their animadversions, have been raised to the same stations, and then became capable of weighing the subject fully, and of viewing it in all its bearings—they have pursued precisely the same course. Should it ultimately appear that the measure in question is not the most conducive to the advancement of anatomical and surgical knowledge, its having been adopted will not in the least degree involve the purity of motive, the integrity of principle, among that distinguished body of surgeons,—comprising independent, enlightened, and practical men—who constitute the court.* It cannot be doubted, that the maintenance of schools in which a complete system of medical

* It has been stated that Dr. William Hunter, and other very able men, could not have founded schools, had this law existed in their time; but the difference of time and circumstance nullifies the argument. William Hunter, distinguished as he undoubtedly was, would perhaps not have been so pre-eminent among his compeers, had he lived in times when the spirit of enquiry was so universal as is now the case.

and surgical instruction is given, is of the utmost importance to the security of liberal education. Here anatomy can be taught not only in lectures, but practically in dissections—combined with morbid anatomy, as elucidated in specimens and examinations; and also, comparative anatomy. Surgery can likewise be delineated in its principles and practice. It is no slight advantage to the student, that from cases under treatment in the hospitals, he can derive the best elucidation of the theory of surgery, so that theory and practice may be combined. Although in general practice a much greater number of medical cases is seen, than of those which are strictly surgical, yet much less interest is generally taken in medical studies, than in those which are surgical. This may, perhaps, easily be accounted for. Much of the surgery in hospitals consists of important cases demanding operations, and there is an eclat about an operation which does not arise from the treatment of a case of fever or of internal inflammation, though, perhaps, the skill displayed may be much greater in the latter instances, than in the former. But where clinical medical lectures are given, or where the theory of disease is associated with its appearance in the patient, an interest is excited which cannot be imparted by an abstract discussion. With respect to midwifery,

and chemistry, *materia medica*, natural and experimental philosophy, and other objects usually forming a part of medical education, I do not discover any advantages superior to those which may be procurable in a private school, except in the circumstances that a large school can command (if disposed to do so) the highest talents in the several departments of knowledge ; and the associations are more favourable to emulation. However, I think there are other advantages in attending a complete system of instruction at one school, rather than in acquiring instruction by fragments. Where there are rival teachers, whose pupils intermix, party sentiments are not unfrequently engendered amongst the students, and lead to discussions unfriendly to close application. Even in the mind of the pupil himself, when attending anatomy at one school, surgery at another, and medicine at a third, there is a tendency to a measure of distraction which he does not experience when he devotes himself to a series of lectures associated by a common interest. Here too, such arrangements are made, that a complete system of medical and surgical instruction can be conveyed with the greatest economy of time.

It is true that anatomy is one of those natural sciences which do not depend on a man's opinion, so that by industry, and by a fondness

for the science, an individual may familiarize himself with all that has been known in relation to the subject without difficulty. But there are, as in all other departments of natural history, depths to which the human mind has never penetrated, and on the unfolding of which, knowledge of vast importance may depend. It is, therefore, still a field of research, and extensive knowledge is requisite before a man can hope to direct his inquiries successfully in the development of intricate parts of the science. The faculty of *teaching* is distinct from that of *acquiring* anatomy, though they are sometimes happily united. Many a good anatomist has been deficient in the power of describing with perspicuity, and individuals not excelling in other qualities, have had remarkable facilities of imparting knowledge to the pupil. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the more extended the mental resources of the lecturer, and the greater his intimacy with the subject, so in proportion will his teaching be lucid and successful. The structure of bone and the general configuration of the skeleton, afford ample scope for pleasing and useful contemplation. The formation of muscles—the distribution of nerves and vessels—may be given in dry detail, or made topics of the liveliest interest, according to the knowledge and feelings of the teacher.

It is not, therefore, a man's becoming perfectly familiar with anatomical structure, even if he be conversant, as he ought to be, with comparative anatomy, to constitute him a really good lecturer. Combined with these subjects he should have general knowledge; and in the physiological department, considerable acquaintance with other sciences is indispensable. These are not *every day* attainments, and it is perhaps only a man whose natural endowments and early advantages have been peculiarly favorable, and are combined with extraordinary zeal, and whose ambition to excel surmounts every obstacle, who is really qualified to undertake this—*the highest station in medical as well as surgical tuition*. To a mind then, peculiarly gifted—full of ardour—and impelled by a laudable ambition to excel in his profession—may not the road be open to even the highest seat of honor—to the station of most commanding influence in the profession? But a man's talents as a teacher cannot be fully ascertained till they have been tried. There is now, indeed, no impediment to an individual's devoting himself to anatomical and surgical teaching, except that his testimonials will not be received at the College, consequently his class would be very limited. The question whether they ought to be received, appears to me not very difficult of

solution. The number of lecturers on anatomy was multiplying so rapidly, and certainly not uniformly with the requisite talents, that the adoption of some restrictive measure was necessary, and where was it possible to draw the line without discouraging some whose talents were eminently suitable for the undertaking? But having by this regulation narrowed the circle, it should be made complete. The number of professors being lessened it behooves the Court so to regulate them, that these responsible offices shall be filled by the ablest men; and at the same time to guard against the discouragement of emulation. An individual whose friends had not prescience enough to anticipate the direction and powers of the youthful mind; or whose means were not adequate to bind him apprentice to a hospital surgeon; or whose influence was not sufficient to obtain the subsequent appointment, stands no chance whatever of gaining an adequate recompence for extraordinary exertion. Withdrawing from the succeeding race of private teachers the privilege of qualifying their pupils for examination at the College, deprives the teacher of one of his principal motives to exertion, and will inevitably tend to restrain the exertion of talent, unless some compensatory motive be supplied. It is my firm conviction that these schools had better

be connected with hospitals—be completely organized schools : but as competition will be lessened, the professorships surely will not be the object of pecuniary speculation, nor be allowed to descend exclusively in the line of apprentices, as I believe is usually the case. Among the number of gentlemen who had enjoyed privileges of this nature, it would rarely happen that one of considerable talent could not be found, who having been accustomed to assist the lecturer, would be expected to succeed to the chair, perhaps on some pecuniary consideration being given. But it does not always happen that natural endowment, and industry, and appropriate acquirement run in the line of apprentices, and the mischievous tendency of this mode of filling the chairs at the recognized schools, might be fatal to the reputation of a school, and be extremely prejudicial to the pupils, who are compelled, perhaps by circumstances over which they have no control, to derive their qualifications thence. About great talent there is often an eccentricity. It will not be seen in a prescribed orbit, but it bursts the barrier, meets us where we little expected it, rises higher and higher, and sheds its illuminating rays on this department and on that ; and yet as it started in its course out of a prescribed order of induction, not only are the

avenues to honor and recompence shut against it, but mankind are deprived of the advantages it might have conferred.

With all due and respectful deference to the Court of the College I would suggest, that it might be very greatly to the interest of science, if the appointment of professors in the recognized schools were in some degree under the regulations of that Court; and arrangements so made, that the professor's chair may be accessible to pre-eminent and appropriate talent, wherever found. We should then have the most powerful incentive to mental exertion; there would occur no want of a succession of the most competent men; and there would be some guarantee that the numerous youths who resort to our metropolitan hospitals to engage in scientific pursuits, would not have their principles endangered. Actuated as the Court undoubtedly is, by a strong desire not only to uphold, but to elevate and advance the character of the profession, I do not doubt but that they will carry on the work of improvement with as much decision as existing interests and the good of the whole will allow. I apprehend that their powers do not yet authorize them to take hospital professorships under their control, but they form so very essential a part of the education of the surgeon, that we cannot but hope that every

possible security will be obtained that these appointments shall not necessarily descend by a pre-determined successorship—shall not be held by men who do not possess the highest talents. The number of apprentices would not be reduced by their enlarging the sphere out of which the lecturers would be chosen. They would still enjoy peculiar advantages, and their exertions will not be abated by knowing that though their claims may remain undisputed, their qualifications may be questioned—that they may find competitors, not only among their fellow apprentices, but from among the most distinguished men, who not having been apprentices, have given evidence of high attainments and have received a testimonial that they are eligible to become candidates for the eminent honors connected with hospital appointments.

Seeing that the practice of surgery is in a state of rapid improvement, it might fairly become a question whether the body of practitioners, growing as they are in respectability, should not leave the Court in the exercise of absolute authority, to the undisturbed pursuit of their own plans, by which so much good has been effected,—grateful for the past and confiding for the future. Convinced as we are that the legislative and executive trusts could not be in the hands of men guided by

purer motives—possessing sounder judgment—of larger experience—nor more alive to the noble and important object of rendering surgery increasingly efficient for the great purposes of humanity—we could not place our confidence elsewhere with greater safety or satisfaction. Who can view the Court severally, and not say with respect to most of them, if not of all, that they are men of the highest probity—and occupy the first ranks for their professional attainment—and for the liberal exercise of their talent in the mitigation of human suffering?—Why, it may be asked, should we charge them collectively with that, which no man has temerity enough to impute to them personally, nor even entertains the suspicion that either is capable of? Most of those individuals who formed the confederacy to subvert the charter of the College, and who have concurred in expressions of contempt and indignation, undoubtedly would acknowledge that those expressions were merely the ebullitions of transient excitement. The Court itself, however, grieved as they might have been, that their best intentions and unwearied exertions have been somewhat ungraciously received, will not regret to find that their children have imbibed a spirit of solicitude to advance the honor of the profession, by extending its usefulness. Inertness

and pusillanimity perhaps, are among the worst features of a people. Much as has been done within a few years in the cultivation of the science and art of surgery, there yet remains a great deal more to be effected. Individually, something may be done, if our energies are not expended on useless objects. In combination, energy acquires efficiency, and if we do not lose sight of the courtesies of life, the temperate discussion of laws cannot fail of being advantageous. Some useful suggestion may be elicited, or some evils may be discovered. The intercourse itself, too, allays feelings of jealousy, and fosters those of an ingenuous and kindly nature, which are so congenial with occupations which daily excite our compassion and sympathy.

That the Court of the College will at all times be accessible to respectful suggestions from the members, the course they have pursued, and the character sustained by the individuals who compose it, are a sufficient pledge. They would have sacrificed their high respectability had they entertained the petition of a meeting, controlled by a malignant spirit—a spirit totally derogatory to the good-feelings which bind men in society—a spirit which would lead men to annihilate whatever did not perfectly harmonize with itself, and which, if widely extended, might

endanger every beneficent institution. Those respectable individuals who concurred in this petition, had surely forgotten, that but a very short time before, the Theatre of the College, devoted as it is to the illustration of the most interesting departments of science, had been made the scene of wanton and disgraceful tumult, by the individual who convened and directed the proceedings of the assembly.

Desirous as I am that we should maintain the character of an enlightened and liberal profession, I beg to invite attention to an influence widely extending amongst us, and mischievous in its tendency. With personal character, or even with baneful principles which a man may limit within his own circle, I would not meddle, and should gladly abstain from the following observations, were it not for the feeling that the principles and morals of the rising youths in the profession are in danger of being tainted, through a channel which ought to convey the purest streams of information. The periodical publication, *The Lancet*, made its appearance at the time when the era for small weekly pamphlets commenced, and struck out for itself an unbeaten course. I would not willingly misrepresent its character, but it appears that Hospital Reports, often misrepresented—reports of Lectures, surreptitiously obtained—combined with

a disposition to personal invective, and low ribaldry, were its leading features. Much as it may surprise men of education and taste, it is nevertheless true, that envenomed and polluted as it is, the members of the profession have become rather extensively impregnated with its virus. Its weekly appearance affords opportunity for the early diffusion of medical intelligence. The detail of important cases in hospital practice was adapted to excite lively interest, and gave many practitioners, in and near the metropolis, the opportunity of seeing an extraordinary case before the patient left the hospital. The reports of lectures, taken as delivered by the lecturer, had somewhat of the vivacity of oral communication. These circumstances tend, a little, to extenuate the inconsiderateness of sanctioning a publication, whose principal articles were obtained from prohibited resources. The unlimited and laudable desire of gaining useful information, seduced readers generally from the inquiry, how this information was obtained, and with what it was combined; but surely these points ought not to have been disregarded. Where is there a man in the profession who would not be despised and scouted, who, by becoming accessory to the injury or mal-appropriation of another's property, rendered himself a *particeps criminis*? Are not the mental resources

of a professional man as much the natural and acquired rights, by which he advances his interest in the world, as the goods on his shelves are the property of the shopkeeper? The professional man has, perhaps, no other means of subsistence. He may not establish his legal claim to this property any more than the physician can adduce the warrant of law to demand his fee; but there is virtually an equal right in one case as in the other. Mental property is often acquired at the greatest expense. Money, and time, and comfort, and health, have all been sacrificed in the acquisition of knowledge, and if the principles on which *The Lancet* is conducted are well founded, the moment the man of science opens his mind to make known what he possesses, and enters into a certain compact by which he is willing to disseminate for the good of others as well as himself—the result of his labours—an individual who has had no participation in the labour, and who has paid no equivalent for the costly information, may violate the well-understood, if not legally-secured engagement, may seize the intelligence and distribute it to the public for his own benefit! In a moral point of view, surely, there is no difference between the guilt of robbing an individual of that property which is elaborated by the powers of his mind, or depriving

him of a costly article wrought by the labour of his hands ; between violating an honorary agreement, or one in which the parties are bound by stamp, seal, and signature. We cannot, however, wonder that in every order of society an individual should be found whom no obligations bind, but it is a little astounding, in an age when the value of mental culture is somewhat unusually appreciated, and when feelings of moral rectitude appear to be exerting unprecedented influence, that such a character should meet with countenance. Yes, and not merely of men unaccustomed to weigh the motives which ought to guide us in society, but men whom we are habituated to regard as among the brightest ornaments of our profession. Some, perhaps, forgetting the injunction, that we are “not to do evil that good may come,” have taken in this publication on account of the information it contains, and if they have reflected at all on the subject, have satisfied their scruples with the notion that the good resulting from the dissemination of useful knowledge would justify the means of its accomplishment. In the bustle of life many have, no doubt, taken in the publication without considering its antecedent or ulterior relations ; but that men of high character—eminent in their attainments—avowedly hostile to the principles of the publication—who have reprobated

the plan on which it is conducted—who feel indignant at its personalities and speculations, and yet regularly take it in—is an inconsistency we did not expect to have met with. We cannot, however, but see the advantage of salutary laws, when even among the more enlightened order of men, of the most civilized country, there is not firm and unyielding principle enough to protect private interests, where the powerful arm of the law does not interpose.

The only reason that can be assigned with any hope of reconciling these discrepancies, is the facility offered by this publication for the speedy dissemination of valuable information. But we must not forget, when viewing it exclusively in reference to science, that it carries with it some evils which tend to neutralize its advantages. How can we rely on the reports of lectures which do not pass under the correction of the lecturer? And, with respect to hospital reports, (on which perhaps the public might be regarded as having some claim) there is considerable danger of misconception or mis-statement unless they were authenticated. Many gentlemen, peculiarly adapted to lecture, will be restrained from rendering the profession and the public that important service, through an unwillingness to see an imperfect statement of what they

have delivered, circulating in every number of *The Lancet*, accompanied, perhaps, with observations repugnant alike to justice and generosity.

It does not always follow that the views of the author are matured, on every point, even when he delivers his lecture, and therefore we have the greatest security for correct and perspicuous discussions when an author is permitted to choose his own time and manner for laying them before the public.

With respect to articles of intelligence, some objections arise from the weekly appearance of the work. It acquires too much of newspaper uncertainty. The editor himself is liable to be imposed upon in the haste of publication. Garbled and uncandid statements are not, perhaps, unacceptable to an editor who will allow an aggrieved party to insert a counter-statement; but it is not every man who likes to be drawn into controversy with a disingenuous opponent.

It behooves those of us who have the charge of pupils, or who have sons rising into the profession, to look a little to the effect of our laxity of principle on them. They are greatly influenced by our example; and if we practically encourage what we verbally and in judgment denounce, we do them an injury by withholding from them a fixed rule of discri-

minating right from wrong. That which we ourselves read, they will read. The youthful mind is ever ready to seize with avidity what is amusing; and the spirit of personal invective—low witticisms—the epithets of ridicule and abuse—will not fail to arrest their attention. No one will maintain that their acquiring familiarity with these properties of language, will aid them in the pursuit of science, or excite their relish for the sober study of medical literature, or for patient research, so necessary to success in every complicated object of inquiry. It will not be doubted that profane scurrility, which may present an attractive aspect when associated with effusions of humour, is a species of writing with which it is undesirable our young men should become familiar. But the objections acquire much additional force, when with aspersions of character, and other evils adverted to, there is an aim to throw discredit on divine revelation, or to jest with, or parodize, any parts of the sacred volume, or to treat religion with contemptuous merriment. The parent or master but ill performs his duty, who does not endeavour to exclude such publications from the habitual perusal of youths whose studies it is his duty to guide, and whose habits he may, probably, govern. That “evil communications corrupt good manners,” is a trite but

useful maxim. Every one admits that it is impossible to associate much with ill-disposed persons, without imbibing somewhat of their spirit, or conforming, in some degree, to their practices. Reading is a species of intercourse; and young persons whose habits have not acquired solidity, will be more disposed to catch at those parts of an author which have an air of mirth, even though of an impious tendency, than at those which contribute to expand the intellect, to temper the feelings, and to correct the judgment. When our youths begin to jest with any fundamental truth; or when they learn to utter coarse and vulgar epithets, perhaps at first quoted playfully from what they read, their moral principles are endangered. The mind, by frequent exposure, soon becomes reconciled to evil which at first left the sting of compunction; and evil habits are not easily overcome.

This, however, is not the place for extended discussions of this nature. But whilst advertising to the recent efforts to obtain an alteration in the laws of the College, it was impossible not to perceive that those efforts were intimately associated with *The Lancet*. Feeling deeply interested in the advancement of medical knowledge, in the cultivation of liberality, in the maintenance of pure principles, and of genuine humanity and kindness, it seemed

incumbent upon me, whatever taunts or derision I may encounter, to protest against conduct which is directly subversive of those motives under which alone we can live harmoniously, and labour successfully.

The period of retrospection may probably arrive; and when the mind shall have seriously to contemplate the evanescence of earthly things, and shall look back for some safe and comfortable retreat, it may then, perhaps, be discovered that we cannot act at random with impunity. When the morning and mid-day of life shall come under the reflection of its evening; when the mind shall rapidly review the course it has pursued, it will itself be incapable of deriving one moment's satisfaction from having scoffed at revealed or practical religion; indulged in profane ribaldry; or gilded, by combination with science, the tenets of an infidel or a libertine. And least of all will it be a source of consolation, when conscience may suggest the speedy approach of a day of retribution, that the powers of mind had been assiduously exerted to pollute the streams at which a goodly number of inquiring youths—amiable, pliable, and intelligent—the hopes of science and of humanity—are invited to drink—and drinking, become contaminated.

It has been laid to our charge, that having so continually to contemplate the skill of the

Creator in the structure of the human fabric, and witnessing so habitually the devastations of casualty and disease, under all their varied forms—it is surprising that but few comparatively have duly appreciated the blessings of christianity, or even inquired into the evidences of revelation. I am happy however to know, that there are very many amongst us who not only fully and cordially assent to this evidence, but are exemplary in all the duties—personal and relative—private and public, of a religious life. Some of these are men of the most refined taste, whose exertions in the cultivation of science have been the most successful—men capable of realizing, in the highest degree, the pleasures of literature, of science, and of social intercourse: but with all their capacity of delight, the exercises of religion, and the generous impulse it imparts to do good, by mitigating the sorrows of others, afford them gratifications far more exquisite than can be enjoyed through any other source.

ON GENERAL PRACTICE.

IN offering a few remarks on this subject, I shall take it for granted, whatever might be said in favor of the division of labour, that it is for the good of society that medicine, surgery, and midwifery, should continue to be practised in combination.

Among the respective departments of medical labour, those who embrace these united objects, are far more numerous than those who fulfil the duties of an individual line; and I think it would not be difficult to prove, viewing their more extended connexion with society, that they have the means of being as pre-eminent in utility as they exceed in number. In making this bold assertion, it is pre-supposed that all the measures placed at their command for acquiring competency of knowledge, are legitimately used; for if they are not, the argument cannot be sustained. If there be inadequacy, the extent of the relation to society proportionably increases the evil. The individual who engages in medical practice, undertakes an office of the utmost responsibility—involving interests the most complicated and momentous. His duties do not

merely consist in the treatment of disease, though this, perhaps, may be viewed as his first and highest duty. He has often to sooth and satisfy anxiety where no disease exists. He should be moderately well acquainted with mental and moral philosophy; for many circumstances under which he is appealed to, call upon him for the exercise of some practical wisdom in the management of phenomena little subject to medical treatment. He is often referred to as a public officer, to decide points of vast importance in relation to individuals or to the community; and in the discharge of his private and public functions, it is no small advantage for him to be capable of perspicuous representation. It is not every man, however eminent his attainments in knowledge may be, whose powers of description are clear enough to satisfy an intelligent mind, or to bear the scrutiny of a legal court. Then, too, surgery presents us with an appalling catalogue of diseases and injuries which demand the most prompt and skilful interposition:—and, regular as generally are the operations of nature, the engagements of an accoucheur demand extensive knowledge, unwearied patience, and tender sympathy—combined with great decision of character, and the utmost degree of self-possession. We need not be discouraged, however, by this formidable

though not overdrawn representation ; for extensive as the qualifications of an efficient General Practitioner must be, it is possible for him, in each department, to attain an eminence well deserving of public confidence. It must, however, be evident that the gaining of this competency demands no common exertion, and the period has arrived when it is incumbent on those who embrace the general objects of medical and surgical practice, to consider how they are likely to stand in the estimation of a community rapidly advancing in intellectual attainment. People are not now contented with acquiring enlarged views of their own occupations, but whilst bestowing unprecedented care in the cultivation of their peculiar allotments, they are disposed to glance on their neighbours', and many have become very expert in detecting their imperfections. The medical, in common with other sciences, has attracted popular attention ; and I hope the scrutiny to which we are submitted will have a tendency to eradicate all dishonorable practices, to which some have resorted as a substitute for patient study and persevering industry. Appealing to the restless passion for novelty, which still exerts so much influence on the public, taking unfair advantage of their inability to appreciate suggestions for the relief of human suffering, and finding a *pabulum*

in vulgar credulity, many new and useless schemes have been promulgated, withdrawing, for a while, the confidence of the afflicted from their only safe resource for succour. However, allowing these evils their greatest weight, it may justly be maintained that there never was a period when the members of the medical profession were actuated by better sentiments than in the present day. The regulations which have been adopted by the Court of the Royal College of Surgeons, and by that of the Society of Apothecaries, as to the education and qualification of their respective members, have not only secured greater extent of elementary knowledge, but have inspired the surgeon and apothecary with unprecedented zeal for the cultivation of the art; and following up their early advantages with a course of subsequent observation and research, much greater efficiency for duty has been obtained. But, notwithstanding these auspicious circumstances, there are points regarding the general practitioner which demand his most serious consideration. The number of individuals engaged in medical pursuits, as, indeed, in those of other professions, has of late very rapidly increased. Without the least intention to impute unworthy motives to men occupied in other departments, the general practitioner cannot be insensible to the encroachments

likely to be made upon him by the overwhelming augmentation of physicians and pure surgeons. Every man, who engages in professional duty, reasonably expects to obtain a respectable subsistence: and where the ground had been pretty fully occupied before, we cannot wonder if the physician or surgeon be tempted to descend a little both in fees and habits from the high rank and dignified respectability of his established cotemporaries; so that by gleanings from the upper classes of society, and by yielding to the condition of the lower, he gradually insinuates himself into practice. This, however, is a course which cannot fail to engender some hostile feelings among his brethren, and will ultimately militate against the general interests of the profession, without conducing to the good of the community.* Advancing intelligence and efficiency in one class, and of growing numbers in both, will necessarily tend, without much caution, to excite a spirit of rivalry which will detract from the estimation in which they are both held by a sagacious and discerning people. No one,

* We have heard that there are physicians and surgeons who not only prescribe and attend for half the ordinary fees, but who, whilst professing to despise the pharmaceutical art, enter into a compact with a neighbouring chemist and druggist and participate in his profits. This, however, is a subterfuge to which an ingenuous mind will not resort.

can entertain higher respect for the erudition and talent of both physicians and surgeons than myself, nor has any one greater occasion to attest the generosity of their deportment towards the general practitioner. That exceptions should exist amidst the imperfections of human nature ought not to surprise us; but if those exceptions are numerous, it conduces to the good of the whole to bring them under animadversion.

The physician and surgeon have no warrant when called in consultation with brethren inferior to themselves, perhaps, only in rank, to maintain an air of supercilious and studied distance—nor by any inuendo to impair the confidence in the family attendant—nor by any extraneous attentions to aim to supplant him, any more than the general practitioner would be justified in an effort to withhold from gentlemen, whose aid he has solicited, the award which may be fairly due to the exercise of superior skill. It does not, however, fall beneath the intention of the present address, to intermeddle with any interests except those of the surgeon-apothecary; nevertheless they are so interwoven with the other departments in practice, that it was impossible wholly to disunite them.

Sometimes we are embarrassed in appreciating the distinctions which the various titles

we sustain convey, and of which distinctions some amongst us are exceedingly tenacious. We are often at a loss in ascertaining where to draw the line between the physician and surgeon, and between the *pure* and *medical* surgeon; but the public do not encounter equal difficulty. A man feels that he has a malady, with the name and nature of which he is wholly unacquainted. He hears of, or knows an individual who stands in good repute, but whether he be a physician or surgeon, whether he be a fellow or a licentiate of London, or a diplomatist of Aberdeen, gives him no concern, (and certainly need give him none) so that he find a remedy for his disease. He perceives too, that his disregard of titles does not in the least inconvenience him, for, if cutting instruments are not required, few physicians object to undertaking the management of a surgical case. And I believe it is undeniable, that by far the majority of cases, which, in private engagements, pass under the observation of the pure surgeon, demand the adoption of medical treatment; so that the principal difference between him and the general practitioner is, that the latter dispenses his own medicine, and usually acts as an accoucheur.

If the surgeon-apothecary associate the business of a chemist and druggist with his medical occupation, his extra - professional

machinery becomes so complicated as to occasion such a diversion of the mind from professional studies as must inevitably detract from his efficiency. Should he also conjoin the dispensing of quack - medicine and perfumery, a circumstance not very unfrequently observed, he is not only disabled for the duties which he avows himself competent to undertake, but he allows an alienation of professional and honorable feeling. Such an individual can neither expect to stand well in the estimation of his brethren, nor to rise high in the confidence of his intelligent neighbours.

Conceding every thing that is due to the general learning and distinguished ability of physicians and surgeons, yet if we estimate the value of any occupation according to its adaptation to the ordinary wants of mankind, it must be admitted that the general practitioner has the means of the most extended usefulness, provided he employ those means in the most effectual manner.

No man, however, can expect to rise above mediocrity who does not devote all his energies to the duties of his profession. Occasional seasons of recreation will not be incompatible with the surrender of himself to pursuits or to trains of thought which either directly or mediately bear on the alleviation of human suffering. Nothing can afford, to a well-

disposed mind, so powerful an incentive to exertion, as the due impression of the extent of its responsibility, and a full consciousness of its opportunities of doing good. I have already adverted, though in very inadequate terms, to the extent of our responsibility, from which a mind duly susceptible would shrink, were it not supported by the assurance that no means had been wilfully neglected of gaining all the knowledge which could be put in requisition.

Numerous benefits undoubtedly arise from the division of labour, but these advantages are not without their attendant disadvantages; and this is peculiarly the case in the practice of medicine. In demonstrating this, we need only advert to the constitutional origin of topical diseases; and the reverse of this, the local origin of many constitutional derangements. Affections strictly surgical so often merge into disorders which demand medical treatment, that it is impossible wholly to disjoin them, and to define the termination of one and the commencement of the other. How often are physicians called to witness attacks which demand the immediate use of the lancet, but before it can be employed a surgeon must be summoned, often at considerable loss of time! Many serious diseases are allowed to go on without efficient management, because the

examination requisite to disclose the precise condition of the patient was rather of a surgical than of a medical nature! If we can but secure a clear understanding—deep and extensive information of the general principles of medical and surgical science—and accuracy of discrimination, it will not detract from the efficiency of the executive, that it centre in the same person, that individual having every expedient for the relief of the sufferer at his immediate command. Still the accountability he undertakes is a very serious one, and were it not that the same fundamental principles must guide us in each department, the individual who combines the whole, would require an unattainable comprehensiveness and versatility of talent.

It is, however, an encouraging fact, that the possibility of obtaining great distinction, even in general practice, has been occasionally demonstrated. A conscientious man will not satisfy himself, in the performance of his important duties, that in the season of emergency he can solicit the aid of others, by whose greater skill his own deficiencies might be supplied. In general, the period when disease is most under control is its early development; and if our treatment be inefficient then, the mischief might be irreparable. The practitioner, indeed, may shield himself from censure, but

the mind that can be contented with escaping reproach, when by his ignorance he has been accessory to the mutilation, or irremediable suffering, or death of a fellow creature, must be destitute of humane and honorable feeling. It is true that, with every possible acquirement and after the most enlarged experience, errors of judgment will be sometimes committed; but the want of absolute certainty in the application of the mental powers forms no pretext or apology for the great culpability of neglecting their cultivation.

We ought not to overlook the fact, that, in departments requiring operations of a very delicate nature, great manual dexterity has been acquired by persons who have devoted themselves rather closely to that particular branch; but it has not generally resulted that the science itself has been promoted by exclusive application of the mind. Where considerable improvements have taken place, they have usually been effected by men who may have cultivated one branch in connexion with attentive observation and extensive practice in other departments of labour, or who had previously allowed themselves to range freely through the whole field of medical and surgical science.

The comparison of the respective claims of different classes of men to public regard would

involve us in a discussion equally unpleasant and unprofitable. Our physicians and surgeons are deserving of the highest respect, and the general practitioner would very properly retire from competition with them if it were only on the ground of their higher rank. Sometimes, however, this courteousness has been carried too far, and has tended to disparage themselves in the estimation of the public. The deference due to the opinions of superior and able men must be distinguished from the abject submission sometimes demanded where there exists no other than a nominal superiority. Genuine talent is unassuming, and men of the highest cultivation and discernment are usually found the most affable and kind in their counsels. On various points of frequent occurrence, the general practitioner will gladly avail himself of a second opinion; and he certainly cannot do better than solicit the aid of an able physician or hospital surgeon, according to the nature of the case. In many parts of the country a general practitioner, a man of intelligence and of ample experience, often becomes the consulting physician and surgeon to a wide circle of his brethren; and I believe is as little disposed to take undue advantage of the confidence reposed in him as the most enlightened men of higher rank. We should do honor to ourselves, and raise

our department of labour in public estimation, by cherishing mutual confidence more extensively. Physicians themselves often derive satisfaction from consultation with their brethren; and the assurance that the most efficient measures were adopted to avert the consequences of disease, is no slight relief to the feelings of surviving friends. Whatever might be the consequence to ourselves, the peculiarly interesting trust reposed in us demands the most inflexible regard to integrity and candour in the performance of our duties. Nothing is more unworthy of a professional man than to exaggerate the danger attendant on disease, for the purpose of ensuring additional merit in relieving it; nor is any thing more unmanly than to disguise danger, from an apprehension that another practitioner would be consulted. The delinquency in both cases may be the same, though the consequences in the latter instance, would be by far the most lamentable.

There is an ostentation about the attendance of two medical men, as well as a partial exoneration from responsibility, to which the conduct of some individuals rather indicates a fondness; but if a general practitioner appear habitually to distrust himself, he must not wonder if he be distrusted by others. In deference, too, to the feelings of patients and their friends, it is desirable to avoid needless

attendance, for when multiplied, it never fails to excite apprehensions of considerable peril which, probably, might have no existence. However, the evils arising from this source are much less deplorable than those which originate in neglecting that advice, which, if it had not really been beneficial to the patient, might have soothed the agony of deeply afflicted survivors. We have known individuals who have rather exulted in not calling in physicians, except when the fate of the patient was inevitable:—the sentiment conveyed by such expressions, shows a dereliction of principle towards the patient, and is extremely unjust towards the physician. If any discredit attend the issue, he participates in it—or the whole of the odium is cast upon him—though he was withheld from the opportunity of averting the catastrophe.

Whilst considering the important influence exerted on the mind of the patient, by the professional attendance, we must not be indifferent to the effects produced by the habits of the individual practitioner. Were I to dwell on the inconsiderateness, indeed it might be justly termed cruelty, of chiefly occupying the time of a visit, in a case of serious indisposition, in extraneous conversation, it would be deemed trifling and superfluous; and yet from observations frequently made by patients, I doubt

whether it does not occur sufficiently often to render it deserving of exposure and reprobation. The frequency of visits has some influence on the comfort and recovery of the sick. Whilst they should be sufficiently frequent to meet every real exigency, and to satisfy the solicitude of friends ; yet, if unnecessarily repeated, they excite the expectation of a crisis, for which there might be no warrant. I have known anxiety and watchfulness kept up in this way, by an over-solicitous attendant, to a pitch of intensity for which there was not the least occasion.

The individual who enters on general practice, certainly engages in no sinecure ; and if he estimate correctly the seriousness of the obligations he undertakes, he will feel it incumbent upon him to pursue a course of unwearied assiduity. But, if he have had the advantage of a good early education—if he have spent his years of professional initiation under favorable guidance, and have completed his preliminary studies creditably — if he embark in practice with ardent feelings, and cultivate the habit of close observation and well-directed study, he undoubtedly has a fair opportunity of becoming most extensively useful.

It cannot be denied that many and great advantages, of a collateral nature, are derived from collegiate studies ; nevertheless, whilst

explicitly admitting this, I affirm that we limit our energies unwarrantably, and do ourselves injustice, if we entertain the notion that the highest acquisitions of professional knowledge are not attainable to men who walk in the more humble ranks. This observation might be confirmed by mentioning the names of many who have been in general practice, but who now do honor to a more elevated order. It has been illiberally insinuated, that an individual who had been accustomed to pharmaceutical duties, could not directly emerge from his low occupations, without carrying with him some traits of a grovelling nature ; but the examples just alluded to, falsify and refute the imputation. I would not willingly indulge in recrimination, nor engage in controversy with an anonymous and uncandid, though well-known essayist ; but would rather feel it a call on those of us who still undertake the more complicated duties, to endeavour by redoubled and persevering exertions, to show, in our deportment, that mean and disingenuous practices are not necessarily associated with our habits :—rather esteem it an additional impulse to exemplify not only the power of knowledge, but another quality which imparts to science its utmost value ; namely—probity in its application.

Considerable efforts have been made of late

years to exclude those who are termed irregular physicians from public appointments, not only in London, but also in the country; and if the epithet be applicable to a deviation from right conduct, or if incompetency be implied, the exclusion is not merely just, but laudable. But, surely, an individual who has emerged from the more busy occupations of the general practitioner by great industry and talent, and whose unfitness rests alone on his not having been qualified by university graduation, is a far more eligible person for appointments demanding practical knowledge than an inexperienced young man, though invested with the highest collegiate honors. Public appointments of this nature are trusts of great importance, and should only be accessible to men who are both capable of fulfilling, and willing to perform the duty they undertake with integrity and advantage; but let us not countenance that which has a tendency to discourage or repress the energies of a superior mind struggling against impediments, and yet capable of surmounting them.

The pleasure of gaining increasing competency to alleviate the sufferings of our fellow-creatures will ever prove a powerful incentive to labour, and the individual who duly estimates his interest in the world—who values public opinion, and especially that of his more respectable brethren, will obtain ample recompence

for all his exertions to acquire and diffuse useful information. Toilsome as the formation of studious habits may be, whilst science unfolds some of the richest treasures, and supplies the most exquisite delight that the human mind is capable of realizing, the maintenance of a good system of mental application will carry with it an adequate reward. The range of sciences embraced by medical men is so wide, and the materials for deep research are so diffusive, as to meet the utmost wishes of an expanded or powerful intellect. The frequent interruptions that occur in general practice, and the harassing nature of some of the duties, which certainly are not friendly to a regular series of mental exercises, too often form a pretext for laxity, or limit the literary occupation of leisure seasons to the perusal of journals or other ephemeral works.

The mode of remuneration usually adopted by general practitioners is not only disreputable to themselves, but is derogatory to the interests of their patients; and the period has arrived, in which, owing to more exalted sentiments in society, and to the augmented number of physicians and surgeons, the plan ought to be relinquished. It will not be possible to establish any regular scale of charges, for whilst individuals in affluent or easy circumstances will not object to a proportionate

remuneration, the medical man ought to be accessible to the poorer classes on easy terms. The man of a liberal and humane disposition will be as remote from extortion on the one hand, as from taking a pitiful recompence on the other. He will willingly adapt himself to the condition of his patients, and will cheerfully render unrequited services where suffering and poverty are unhappily combined. It is true that a patient may suffer no personal injury from the redundant medicine, for this can be avoided in the form of administration ; but the idea that the advantages expected to result from it are divided between the patient and practitioner renders the former more lax in his attention to a course which, in many cases, demands the strictest punctuality. An unprincipled man, too, has an opportunity of crowding in his supplies most disgracefully, and may impose on the sufferer by an apparently moderate charge on the items, whilst making an extravagant total. It affords a temptation also to misrepresentation, by which the morbid sensibilities of a person may be needlessly excited to secure a reward in medicine, when none was really necessary. These customs might not be repulsive to a man who subsists by trade, and who invites his customer to view the article in which he deals. But the medical man should endeavour to withdraw

from the estimation of his employers every notion of traffic, and lead them to regard the exercise of his judgment as that only for which they offer their compensation. It is both detrimental and degrading to him to connive at the supposition that the fee for his services demands the intervention of physic. I wish to see general practice conducted on efficient and honorable principles, but it cannot be so till this disgraceful custom is abandoned.

Having of late years pretty generally adopted a different course of proceeding, and having heard of others who have done so, I cannot entertain a doubt but that the alteration might readily be effected, and never was there a period more favourable for it than the present. The character and qualifications of the general practitioner are greatly elevated—the public are directed by a more liberal policy—and an impulse to the effort might be derived from the example of other departments in the profession. If noble and generous sentiments actuate the practitioner, he will have little difficulty to encounter in accomplishing the object. Indeed, we may rest assured that, unless the plan be altered, the community, disposed as many of them already are to detest the principle of swallowing a nauseous drug, if perchance it might be merely to reward the apothecary, will direct into other channels the

confidence they have been accustomed to bestow on the general practitioner, at the very period when, in other respects, he is most deserving of that confidence.

Various means have been suggested to carry this mode of remuneration into effect. But I think a family medical attendant will find it necessary to draw out a statement periodically; and so long as tradesmen adopt the practice of sending in their accounts annually, we, perhaps, cannot with propriety do otherwise.

With respect to the manner of making the charge, we must be guided a little by circumstances. The more intelligent part of the community may be satisfied with a line and sum total; and others expecting a detail of the particulars, may be satisfied with an affixed total without the specification of individual charges. Where the charge must be considerable, and where the circumstances chargeable are scattered over an entire year, they are liable to be forgotten, and the practitioner may be suspected of committing a breach of trust. Instead, therefore, of distinguishing the form of medicine, whether mixtures, draughts, pills, etc; it is preferable to use the terms visit, visit and medicine, medicine, or similar expression, where it may appear requisite to draw out an account; and then to place a sum at the bottom of each page, or a total at the end of the account.

Although the Apothecaries' Company has, undoubtedly, in many respects exercised the power entrusted with it, so as to secure a far better medical education than was generally obtained before, yet commendable as many of its plans and processes might be, the circumstance of being compelled to resort to a trading company for a testimonial of competency, is by no means friendly to the character of a professional man. But, although it must be perceived that the Company is doing good, and though many of its active members are men of considerable reputation, yet every needless badge of trade detracts from the respectability of men who should live by the exercise of knowledge, not by the exchanges of commerce.

It has been thought that the time demanded for preparing medicinals, compounding and dispensing medicines, must inevitably make so great an inroad on the time of the general practitioner, that he can have little leisure for intellectual cultivation. But there is now no occasion for him to prepare his more elaborate articles, because their preparation is accomplished by the company or by the chemist, on an extended scale, with greater accuracy than could be secured by private operations. If he limit himself to the dispensing of what he himself prescribes, and supposing the quantity not to exceed that which is requisite,

he will suffer no disadvantage commensurate with what he gains in having the medicine faithfully compounded under his own inspection.

Viewed under every possible aspect, the general practitioner is called upon to make exertion in the cultivation of science, and in the more respectable modification of his practice. His own interests cannot but suggest, that unless he be pressing onward in the pursuit of knowledge, the reward he has been accustomed to reap, will be withheld. Reputation urges him to redoubled efforts, by pointing out that the standard is raised both by professional and extra-professional judges—and his “good name, better than riches,” will be tarnished, unless he be determined in the noble contest. Science directs to the pleasures she affords, and to the power she confers, as incentives to strenuous exertion; whilst humanity unfolds to us the multifarious afflictions, and perils, in all the diversities of disease and injury, to which the human body is liable; sudden or insidious in their occurrence, painful and rapid in their course, and destructive in their tendency, unless prompt and well-directed skill alleviate the suffering, or arrest the progress. If neither a solicitude to mitigate human suffering—nor a love of science—nor a regard for the good

opinion of others—nor even considerations of interest—excite us to close and persevering application in this department of human labour, then we are unworthy of the high trust reposed in us, and confidence would be misplaced. Indeed, if the duties we perform are exacted from us merely as a means of subsistence, and we are incapable of realizing any pleasure in the acquisition of knowledge, and in its subserviency to the noble and important design of benefitting others, as well as ourselves, we shall find it a most unsatisfactory speculation. But, on the other hand, arduous as the duties undoubtedly are, to a man of an active and well-informed mind, who will adopt the motto *labor omnia vincit*, a wide and fertile field is presented. If, however, he do not labour, he will neither merit the esteem, nor secure the influence, nor diffuse the benefits which are at his command. And when a few years more shall have rolled by, and he shall be compelled to retire from active employment, he will not have the satisfaction which the man experiences, who, having sedulously employed his talents, finds himself honored and beloved by a large circle of grateful friends, themselves being the trophies of his success in the useful occupation to which his life has been devoted. Nor can he enjoy the hope, that when his earthly existence shall

terminate, he will leave behind him some proofs that he was not endowed with fine feelings and a powerful understanding in vain. It is truly humiliating to suffer the consciousness of having exercised the rational faculties merely to secure self-gratification and subsistence ; passing a useless and parasitical life, a pensioner on others for resources, whether intellectual, moral, or professional. The man who has exerted his own powers—who has multiplied his resources, and directed them steadily to some valuable end—will not fail of his reward. He will enjoy pleasure in his work—he will secure pleasure in the review of what he has done—and in the hope that he will be survived by those who will be somewhat benefitted by his previous existence. Whilst those who are unsteady in their pursuits—negligent in their habits—who do not provide themselves with the means, nor acquire the capacity, for prompt and independent action, can have no real enjoyment in their work ; nor will they be outlived by the good fruits of their labour. It has justly been said—

“ ————— some when they die, die all—

The space quite closes up through which they pass.”



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